

**MINUTES FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF
ICKLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN ICKLEFORD VILLAGE HALL AT 8.00 PM
ON THURSDAY 26TH MAY 2011**

Present: Councillors Miles Maxwell, (Chairman), Philip J Crowe, Mick Barber, Kathy Goldie, Stuart Gray, Samantha Taylor and Colin R Thurstance.

Officer present: Katrina Henshaw (Parish Clerk).

Also present for part or all of the meeting:

County Councillor Nigel Brook
District Councillor Tricia Cowley
Sergeant Guy Westwood

62 residents

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr David Chapallaz (another commitment), PC Kate Hull and 3 residents.

2 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

2.1 Cllr Maxwell welcomed all residents and advised them of the agenda. He mentioned that as of the IPC meeting in May, he had been appointed as Chairman of the Parish Council, which is a great privilege and honour. Cllr Maxwell said that he appreciated the confidence his fellow councillors had shown in his ability to lead IPC, acknowledged that he will inevitably make mistakes, but assured everyone of his positive intent. Cllr Maxwell introduced the other members of IPC; the new members, Sam Taylor, Stuart Gray, Mick Barber – who will bring new thoughts and ideas and enthusiasm, and the re-elected councillors, Philip Crowe, Colin Thurstance, Kathy Goldie and David Chapallaz who bring experience and expertise. Cllr Maxwell paid particular thanks to the out-going Chairman, Philip Crowe for his contributions as Chairman over the past 18 years. The whole village owes Cllr Crowe a huge debt of gratitude for all his contributions. Several items which Cllr Crowe had led were mentioned specifically; his role with the ISRC, in getting the HGV lorry ban implemented, his efforts in getting the Secondary School's Transfer criteria altered to the benefit of the children of Ickleford, and most recently his work with Dr Michael Willoughby on Little Park renovation. Cllr Maxwell welcomed District Councillor Tricia Cowley and congratulated her on her re-election; irrespective of one's political opinions, it's clear that Cllr Cowley is a tireless champion for Ickleford. The late arrival of County Councillor Nigel Brook – who was attending the first part of the Kings Walden APM – was noted. Sergeant Guy Westwood was welcomed, and apologies from PC Katie Hull, who was out on a police operation, were received. Cllr Maxwell thanked the WI for providing refreshments, Nick Jones for providing the PA, and apologies were received from several residents. Finally, Cllr Maxwell mentioned a stalwart of APMs, Derrick Squires, who has been hospitalised for several weeks, and wished Derrick a speedy recovery.

3 REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR NIGEL BROOK

3.1 Cllr Brook read the following report:-

"It is always a pleasure to attend Ickleford Parish Council's meetings and in particular the APM which gives me the opportunity to meet a wider audience – this is the final of seven I have attended this month within my Hitchin Rural Division. I am a firm believer that Parish Councils are a backbone of Local Government as they live in and represent the very people that are about them and know what is going on close to hand. There has been a significant change in the Council this year with Philip Crowe standing down after 18 years as Chairman, a remarkable example of service to ones fellows but I am glad to say that he remains on the Council as Vice Chairman. I should like to take this opportunity of saying a big thank you to the Councillors who stood down and a big welcome to the new Councillors.

On the County front I am delighted the Council Tax remains unchanged for the third year running – it was decided back in July 2009 that whoever won the General Election upcoming money was bound to be reduced so the County acted accordingly in a number of ways and as an illustration no libraries have been closed but the opening hours reduced.

Closer to home, I am glad to say that it appears all children involved in secondary transfer have been satisfactorily placed and this is reflected that I have no appeals coming up for Ickleford. Whilst on education, I cannot let this occasion pass without paying tribute to Pat Salmon who is retiring at the end of term having been such an outstanding Headteacher of the Primary School – a legend in her lifetime is close to the truth and her successor will have a hard act to follow but I am sure that the new head carries all our best wishes.

Finally, my thanks go to the Parish Council for their support and all their hard work. Thank you.”

3.2 The audience was given the opportunity to ask questions. No questions were asked.

4 **REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR TRICIA COWLEY**

4.1 Cllr Gibbs read the following report:-

“I would like to thank everyone who voted for me on the 5th May. I will continue to do anything I can, not only to assist the Parish Council in their work where I can, but also individual residents in Cadwell. My telephone number is available on the North Herts website.

I would also like to congratulate the Parish Councillors who were re-elected and also the new ones, and look forward to working with you all. And as always thank the Parish Council for the hard work and time they spend improving the quality of life in Ickleford.

There has been good news on the funding for the proposed development of allotments at ‘Little Park’ and now this scheme can go forward, I will be helping the Parish Council to get release of the Section 106 monies to put into this scheme.

The Parish Council, over the past few years, have done a great job in working through the improvements the Ickleford residents wish to see when they were consulted for the formation of the Parish Plan. There is still work to do and I am sure your new Parish Council will take the remaining parts of the Parish Plan forward.

Now I’ll turn to the District Council. It seems that I have to report pretty much the same things every year. Tough Finances. The past year we had to front load our budget getting, ie. There was a larger percentage of savings to make in this financial year. We have managed not to cut services and we are moving forward in making sure our facilities and services do not carry heavy subsidies. I.e. residents parking permits are priced at the cost to the Council and not subsidised by other council tax payers. Unfortunately we had to reorganise again and lose some staff. This being done and still retaining our level of service across all area. This next year will probably not be any easier, but we start that process in July.

The Council does have land and property assets, but right now is not the right time to realise those assets. So our capital programme is severely restricted. The only major capital improvement we have been able to fund is the combining of the Hitchin and Letchworth Museums into a new Museum for North Herts in part of the Hitchin Town Hall and at the same time improving the Town Hall and its facilities. This is still in the early stages of procurement and work will probably not start until spring next year. This capital investment will produce savings for the council, not only through the combination of Museums but in the administration of the Town Hall.

I am happy to take questions.”

- 4.2 The audience was given the opportunity to ask questions.
- 4.3 One resident asked if there had been any development on recycling commercial waste. Cllr Cowley explained that waste was not her portfolio but she was aware that NHDC was always looking at it as there was always a demand for more. Cllr Cowley said she would look into this and advise the resident.
- 4.4 One resident asked if there were any plans to replace the plastics recycling bank. He was advised that it was McMullen's who had asked for it to be removed as it was on their land. No other site had been identified.
- 4.5 One resident asked if NHDC had plans to collect plastics from households. Cllr Cowley said NHDC were looking at what could be done but there were cost and environment issues as well as residents having space issues on where to store all the different bins.

5 REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN – COUNCILLOR MILES MAXWELL

- 5.1 Cllr Maxwell invited Cllr Crowe, as previous Chairman, to report on the past 12 months.

Cllr Crowe read the following report:-

“Once again over the last twelve months the Parish Council has continued with its involvement in many projects both new and old to keep the village an interesting place for all.

As reported last year the largest project ever undertaken, the new burial ground, was finally completed and duly opened on the 29th April by Mrs Parker who had generously donated the ground. The whole area had been fully landscaped and the north end planted with wild flowers, and these really came to the fore in June. ‘Open Gardens’ added the burial ground to its list of attractions, and the many visitors who walked the area were highly complimentary on the blaze of colour in evidence.

Cadwell Bridge has been the subject of many discussions over recent months with Hertfordshire Highways who eventually presented five options as to possible solutions, albeit, in their opinion, only one really presented a totally safe option. This would reduce the road under the bridge to a single carriageway with a pedestrian footpath alongside and the traffic both ways controlled by lights. The other alternatives ranged from leaving the status quo, i.e. doing nothing, to various alternatives with lights/further traffic cushions, but none providing a completely safe passage for pedestrians accessing the bridge. The Parish Council is awaiting further details from Highways as we posed various queries to their options and we are awaiting their response.

The prospects of providing allotments for the ‘Little Park’ area behind Turnpike Lane continue to improve with the recent agreement in principle by the lottery to provide a grant towards the costs required to convert the area. North Hertfordshire Homes have in recent months removed all the remaining garages and installed a security post at the St Katharine's entrance in an attempt to prevent unauthorized entry for flytipping purposes. The costs to the Parish Council of landscaping the area ready for allotments and providing fencing and a rainwater system is in excess of £15,000, but with the grant agreed by the lottery, further grant/funding is being sought and it is to be hoped we can achieve some success in the coming months.

The delay in providing the village with the detailed results of the traffic calming has been regrettable, as Hertfordshire Highways have been slow in responding to our requests but they have now provided information which can be viewed on the Parish Councils website. The results indicate a considerable reduction in the speed of traffic through the village which was the objective of the exercise and therefore must be viewed as a success.

In addition Highways have in a recent e-mail to both the Parish Council and various residents who have contacted them direct for information replied, 'Ickleford Parish has been working jointly with Hertfordshire Highways throughout the scheme. We have also jointly undertaken extensive consultation and provided services above the budget constraints. Unfortunately I have been advised by our Client that there will not be additional funding to undertake further consultation on queries raised. Following the Safety Audit comments and the undertaking of the 'Before and After' report, Hertfordshire Highways considers the scheme successful and complete.'

The local Police continue to provide valuable support to the Village, and they continue to hold their regular surgeries in VR Jennings offices on a monthly basis and everyone is always welcome. They will shortly be undertaking a leaflet drop advertising a new 'Property Marking System' with an application form enabling residents to purchase the kit, and which they recommend for the purposes of marking all valuables and household electronic equipment, which can then be identified in the case of theft from private properties.

The village is entering the 'Village of the Year' competition this year as it was felt with the new burial ground and other changes to the village we should have various new items of interest for the judges to view.

Another new project is the research of the old Hyde Mill, and which a group of volunteers have been undertaking involving site clearance and now progressing with investigations into the former ownership going back to 1172. A group have also been tracing the footprint of the old building through painstaking work of sifting through the ground and old bricks and it is proving to be a challenging and interesting project for all involved.

Finally, as Cllr Maxwell mentioned following the recent election we now have a new Parish Council and I should like to express my thanks to James Carlyle, Tim Stephenson and Glenys Palmer, our former Parish Councillors, who did not stand in the election for all their hard work during their time with the Council. I also decided it was time that IPC had a new younger Chairman, to take over and Cllr Maxwell, I know, will be perfect in the role. My thanks to the remaining Councillors who supported me over the years in my time as Chairman and also our Parish Clerk, Katrina Henshaw, for her tireless efforts in handling the constant demands made of her in a professional and capable manner.

I feel sure the coming year will continue to provide plenty of interest given the known projects that remain outstanding for the new Parish Council to take forward, for the benefit of the village.

Thank you."

- 5.2 The audience was given the opportunity to ask questions, but was asked to leave any questions relating to traffic calming until after the report from the Police.
- 5.3 One resident asked about the Hitchin Curve and said she had never seen plans. She was advised that the plans could be viewed at Planning Department at NHDC.
- 5.4 One resident asked about the planning application for a wind farm on land near Cadwell Farm. IPC advised that the application was from Wilbury Farm, Arlesey and was for temporary permission for a period of up to 18 months for a cable stayed structure which supports wind monitoring equipment. Although IPC was not consulted on this application, IPC had objected to it. However, Central Bedfordshire Council has granted permission on this. IPC will monitor this over the 18 months and before the next application is submitted.

6 REPORT FROM PC KATE HULL

6.1 Sergeant Guy Westwood read PC Kate Hull's report in her absence:-

"As of October 2010 the Hitchin Safer Neighbourhood Team was re-structured in line with all Safer Neighbourhood teams in Hertfordshire to ensure that all teams across the county work to a set shift pattern. This unfortunately does not allow any flexibility to swap shifts to accommodate meetings and other events resulting in me not being available to attend local meetings on my patch if I am not on duty.

The Safer Neighbourhood team have been assisted by Roads Policing units and the Hitchin Intervention team with numerous operations around North Herts to combat rural crime and target criminals travelling into and out of Hertfordshire from the Bedfordshire borders.

These operations along with high visibility patrols are ongoing.

On 1st December 2010 several raids were carried out in Bedfordshire resulting in seven arrests and large quantities of stolen property from North Herts southern rural burglaries being recovered and returned to its rightful owners.

The Safer Neighbourhood Team are also conducting operations around Hitchin urban a rural, Operation Scorpion and Operation Prince, whereby the ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Reading) is set up at the roadside and reads number plates of vehicles that are frequenting our roads. If the ANPR highlights a vehicle, an officer further down the road will pull the vehicle over and conduct the relevant checks, to make sure the vehicle and the occupants are legitimate. This has resulted in vehicles being seized due to no insurance and criminals being arrested through intelligence checks. The operation is conducted most days in different locations.

A property marking scheme called SelectaDNA using a paintable substance that is invisible until illuminated by ultra-violet light has been launched in the North Herts rural area. Each pack of the SelectaDNA product contains a unique synthetic DNA material that will assist in identifying any marked property stolen or removed. Following an initial launch of the scheme in the Kings Walden area the product is now being promoted in and around all of the villages in North Herts southern rural.

Crime figures for reporting period 1st April 2010 – 31st March 2011 for the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (CSP) of which we are part of, once again show an overall reduction in crime and an increase in the overall detection rate across the region. This importantly translates to less actual victims of crime, and increased satisfaction for those members of the public who have seen their crime detected, as well as more offenders facing sanctions.

Comparing recorded crimes in Ickleford from last year to this year for the recording period 23rd May 2010 – 23rd May 2011 the crime figures have stayed exactly the same.

The following figures show the reduction within North Herts:

- Robbery down 42.3%
- Serious Violent Crime down 60%
- Racially / Religiously Aggravated Offences down 18.9%
- Theft from Person down 16.5%
- Shoplifting down 14%
- Distraction Burglary down 13.3%
- Theft from Motor Vehicle down 9.7%
- Criminal Damage down 9%
- Serious Sexual Offences down 6.9%
- Anti social behaviour incidents down by 13.2%"

6.2 The audience was given the opportunity to ask questions.

- 6.3 One resident introduced himself as the Secretary for ISRC and advised that there had been some recent minor outbreaks of vandalism at the sports field. He therefore asked if the Police could get out of their car when visiting the area and walk around to the back of the club house. Sergeant Westwood agreed to increase patrols in this area.
- 6.4 As there were no other questions, the Chairman allowed questions on the recent traffic calming scheme. There was a variety of questions about traffic calming, the consultation process, noise pollution and CO2 emissions. IPC answered the questions they were able to but advised they were not experts in this area.
- 6.5 There was a lengthy debate amongst the residents present about the traffic calming with strong feelings both for and against the speed cushions and humps.
- 6.6 In the interest of transparency for the meeting, Cllr Thurstance asked the committee of 'Most Simply' (Ickleford Road Safety Organisers) some questions about their organisation.
- 6.7 One resident wanted to propose having a parish poll on the removal of traffic cushions and humps and asked for the meeting to vote. The Chairman advised that in the interest of transparency it was inappropriate to vote or make any decisions on traffic calming as this had not been specified on the agenda and would not be fair on the electors not present who may have wished to attend if this was going to be discussed.
- 6.8 There was then a debate on Parish Polls. Residents were informed that Parish Polls were unbinding. Again there were strong feelings for and against Parish Polls. Some residents thought it would be of interest to find out what the village wants. Other residents felt that Parish Polls were a waste of public money.

7 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

- 7.1 The next Parish Council meeting will be held on Thursday 2nd June at 7.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 10.00 pm.